城平京最新作、堂々漫画化

『絶園のテンペスト』

先読み不可能な【恋愛×伝奇×ミステリ】始動!!!

新連載83P!!

虚構推理

KYO KOU SUI RI

Invented inference

第1話「一眼一足」

原作小説

本格ミステリ大賞受賞！

『虚構推理 鋼人七瀬』

（講談社ノベルス刊）

大好評発売中！

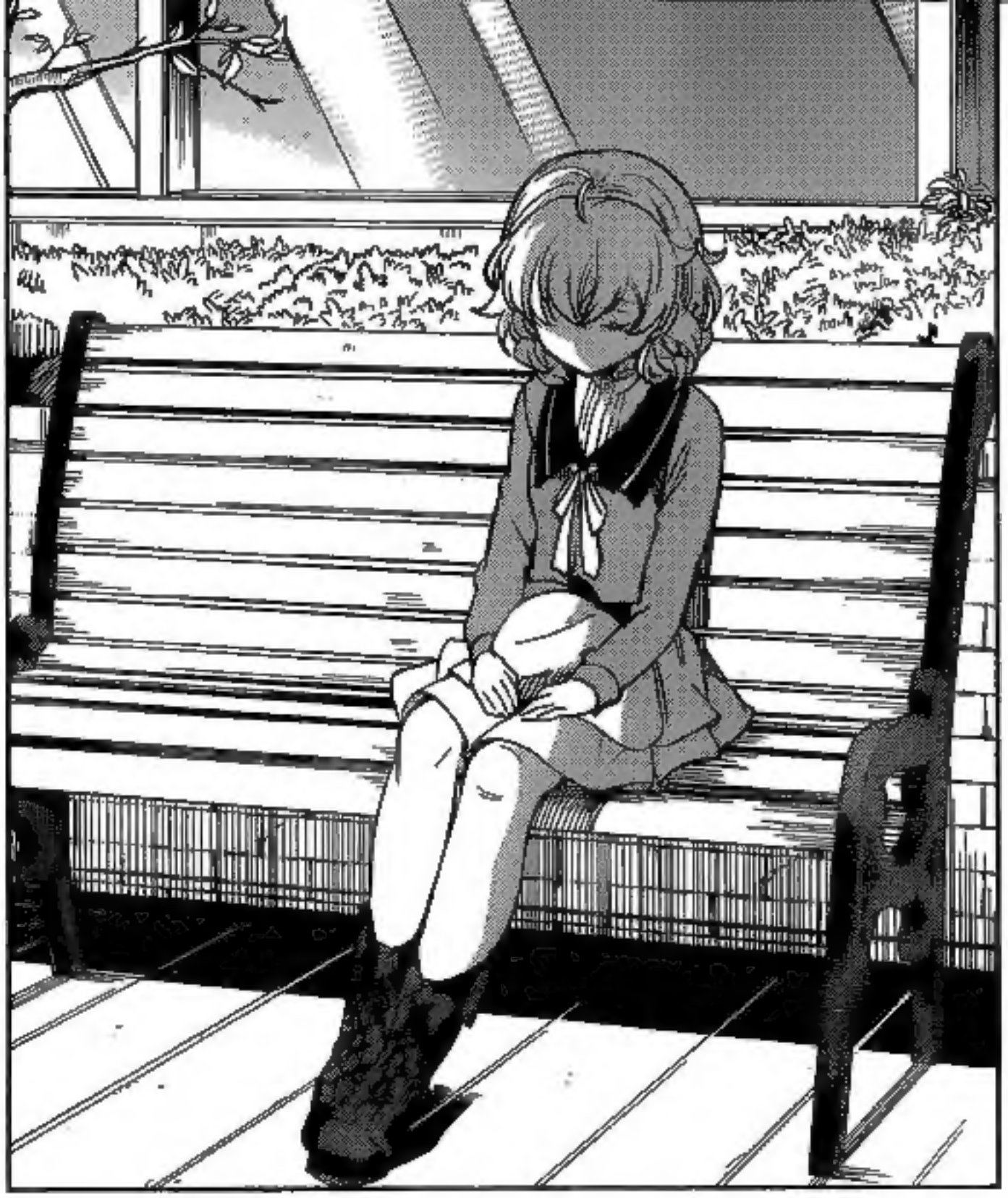
原作／城平京

漫画／片瀬茶柴

小説版キャラクター原案／清原紘

★この漫画はフィクションであり、登場する人物・団体・場所・名称は実在のものとは関係ありません。

WE BESEECH THEE, PLEASE BECOME THE GOD OF OUR WISDOM.



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AH, IWANAGA-SAN, AND HERE I WAS JUST GOING TO WAKE YOU UP.

YOUR PUNCTUALITY'S RIGHT ON THE MARK AS USUAL, ISN'T IT.

H~MMM.

IT'S BECAUSE, THOUGH I LOOK LIKE THIS, I HAVE QUITE THE HEAD ON MY SHOULDERS.

IT LOOKS LIKE KUROU-KUN REALLY DID BREAK UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.

うん…

AH...

ALSO...

すすす

I JUST CAN'T HELP THINKING MAKING THAT MISTAKE IS UNAVOIDABLE.

You're just like a a little c-cat~

IN THE GIRLFRIEND'S CASE, I'VE HEARD THAT SHE'S A YEAR OLDER, AND JUST GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE THIS SPRING AHEAD OF HIM. THEY SAID SHE FOUND EMPLOYMENT IN A DIFFERENT PREFECTURE.

I WONDER IF SOMETHING LIKE THAT ISN'T THE CAUSE?

I DIDN'T CATCH ANY OF THE DETAILS, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S NO MISTAKE.

EVEN THOUGH THEY'D GONE SO FAR AS TO PROMISE TO MARRY EACH OTHER?!

IN ANY CASE, KUROU-KUN CAME TO PAY A GET-WELL VISIT AGAIN TODAY, SO GO GIVE IT YOUR ALL.

WELL THEN...

EVEN THOUGH SHE SAID TO 'GIVE IT MY ALL', WHATEVER SHOULD I DO?

IT WAS TWO YEARS EARLIER THAT I MET THE YOUNG MAN NAMED SAKURAGAWA KUROU.

HURRY UP, LET'S GO--!

ONII-CHAN, WAIT UP!

WH--

--OAH!

IT WAS WHEN I WAS 15 YEARS OLD.

ARE YOU QUITE ALRIGHT?

9

AH!

SORRY.

YOU SAVED ME THERE!

AH!

THANKS...

...FOR THAT.

I GUESS IT'S NORMAL FOR THERE TO BE TIMES WHERE YOU COULD DIE FROM SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I SEE.

IN THAT CASE, AS YOUR SAVIOR, IF YOU WOULD TAKE HEED TO REMEMBER THIS ALL YOUR LIFE, IT WOULD BE MOST PLEASING.

C'MON, YOU'RE EXAGGERA-TING...

YUP.

I'LL MAKE SURE TO REMEMBER IT.

...WHO WAS 20 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME.

THAT WAS SAKURAGAWA KUROU...

...HE NEVERTHELESS EXUDED A BIZARRE KIND OF LIFE-FORCE.

SLENDER AND SPACED OUT, ALWAYS CHEWING GRASS IN A DULL MANNER, AND DEFINITELY SPENDING THEIR WHOLE LIVES ABSENT-MINDEDLY LOST IN A DAZE, BUT...

HE WAS A MAN WHO SEEMED TO ME LIKE A GOAT.

THEY HAVE TWO TOUGH HORNS AS VARIED AS THE TYPES OF GOATS THEMSELVES. THEY RESEMBLE THOSE POSSESSED BY THE ONI.

WHETHER ON MOUNTAINS OR PLAINS, THEY ARE ABLE TO LIVE EASILY.

THEY ARE NIMBLE BY NATURE.

INDEED, ONE SHOULD NOT DESPISE THE GOAT.

THIS IS...

?

THEIR IRRESISTIBLY SIMPLE SHARPNESS.

UHMMM...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, KUROU-KUN? HOW UNSIGHTLY.

IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT?!

WELL... I WAS SAVED BY THIS GIRL HERE, Y'SEE.

SAKI-SAN.

YES, I SAW.

ALL BECAUSE YOU WERE SPACING OUT AGAIN.

GEEZ.

THANKS.

SORRY ABOUT THAT. HIM CAUSING SUCH A BOTHER.

NO, THERE'S ALSO THE POSSIBILITY SHE'S HIS YOUNGER SISTER AND...

...WHY ARE YOU THE ONE APOLOGIZING?

HIS OLDER SISTER?

SOME OTHER RELATIVE?

HE COMES BY ALL THE TIME TO PAY GET-WELL VISITS TO HIS COUSIN WHO'S BEEN HOSPITALIZED LONG-TERM.

PUMP

PUMP

HE'S A SECOND-YEAR AT H-UNIVERSITY AND A STUDENT AT THEIR LAW SCHOOL.

HIS NAME'S SAKURAGAWA KUROU-KUN.

INTENSITY?

HOW-EVER...

..."HOSPITALIZED LONG-TERM" HOWEVER, SHE SEEMED RATHER, WELL, ENERGETIC I SHOULD SAY. SHE HAD A CERTAIN INTENSITY.

COULD IT BE, WHEN YOU SAY 'HIS COUSIN', YOU MEAN A TALL YOUNG WOMAN?

推し甲

WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT *HER*.

AHHH.

AND THAT, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW HIS GIRLFRIEND, KUROU-KUN ENROLLED IN THE SAME COLLEGE SHE DID.

SHE SAID THEY'VE BEEN DATING SINCE HIGH SCHOOL.

...HIS GIRLFRIEND!

THAT YOUNG LADY WHO'S ALWAYS WITH HIM, HER NAME IS SAKI-SAN. SHE'S A YEAR OLDER THAN HIM,...

SFX: CRACK

HE'S BOTH EASY ON THE EYES AND SEEMS SOCIABLE, SO SOME OF MY FELLOW NURSES HAVE TRIED HITTING IT UP WITH HIM, BUT...

NO OFFENSE, KOTOKO-CHAN, BUT I'D HAVE TO GUESS THAT KUROU-KUN IS A LOST CAUSE, DON'T YOU THINK?

....Y-EEEEE EEH-....?

15

WELL, ISN'T THAT JUST PLEASANT FOR HIM.

ALL HE EVER DOES IS TALK ABOUT 'SAKI THIS, MY GIRLFRIEND THAT' WITH A HAPPY LOOK ON HIS FACE.

WITHOUT RUINING THE MOOD, SHE'LL PULL HIM AWAY ASAP AND THEY'LL HEAD OFF SOMEWHERE!

IF KUROU-KUN'S SPEAKING WITH ONE OF THE NURSES, SHE'LL COME OVER, ALL SMILES, INSERT HERSELF BETWEEN THEM AND BREAK THEM APART.

AND BY THE WAY, THE SAME GOES FOR HIS GIRL-FRIEND AS WELL.

ARE YOU TELLING ME YOU THINK IT LOOKS LIKE I HAVE NO CHANCE OF VICTORY?

IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GOT A STRONG DESIRE TO MONOPOLIZE HIM, SO I GET THE FEELING SHE'S IN LOVE WITH KUROU-KUN TOO.

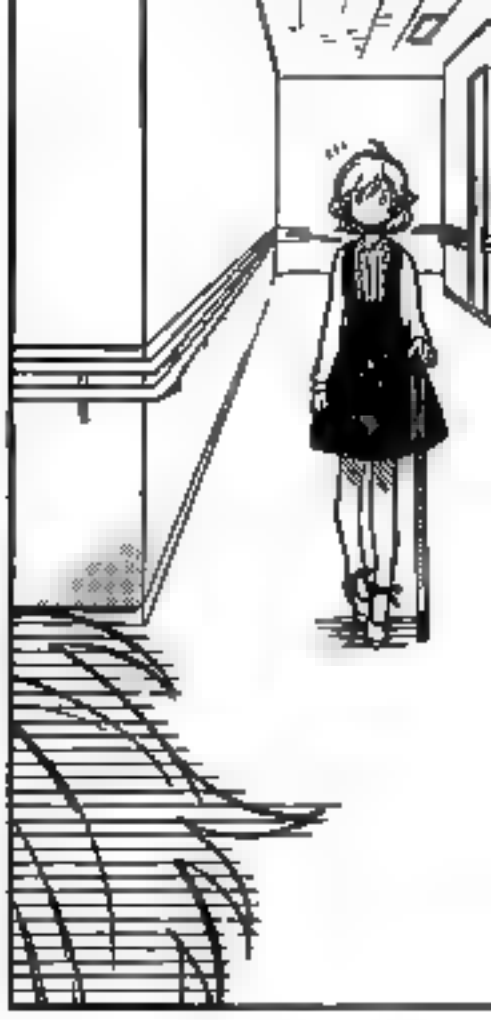
EVEN THOUGH THEY DIDN'T *USED* TO COME IN TOGETHER IN THE PAST.

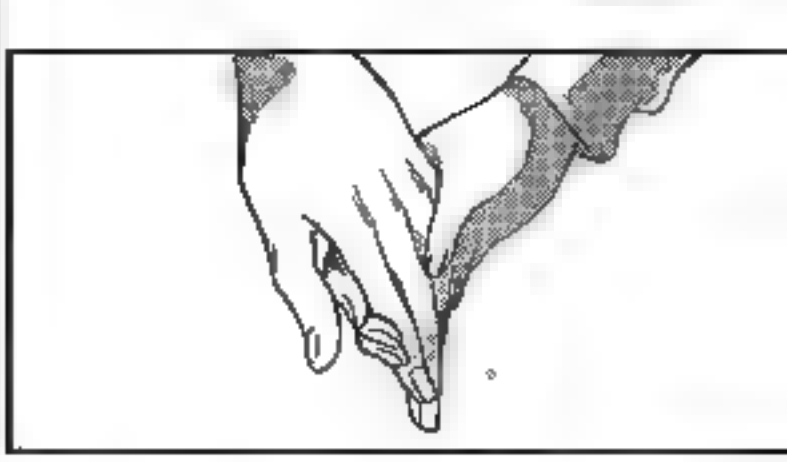
SHE STARTED TO SUSPECT THAT THERE WERE NURSES INTERESTED IN HIM, SO IT SEEMS SHE STARTED TO ACCOMPANY HIM EVERYWHERE.

WELL...

...THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE THE IMPOSSIBLE WILL HAPPEN, SO I SUPPOSE IT'S FINE IF YOU DON'T WANT TO JUST GIVE UP RIGHT OFF THE BAT.

SINCE WOMEN LIKE HER ARE KUROU-KUN'S TYPE, I'D GUESS YOU COULDN'T EVEN BECOME A TARGET OF HIS AFFECTIONS.





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I SAW HIM 2, MAYBE 3 TIMES EACH MONTH AROUND THE HOSPITAL.
I OBSERVED HIM EACH TIME, BUT WITHOUT EVER SAYING ANYTHING.

ONCE KUROU-KUN AND SAKI-SAN GRADUATE...

...THEY TOLD ME THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED.

APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THAT MEETING.

THEY TOLD ME THEY'D JUST GONE TO INTRODUCE EACH OTHER TO THEIR PARENTS BEFORE THIS.

IT'S ABOUT TIME THEY GOT ENGAGED LIKE THEY PLANNED!

THIS WAS INEVITABLE...

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ニヤ

HAS KUROU-SAN BROKEN UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND?

HE'S ALONE TODAY...?

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT THOUGH, I GUESS IT WAS FEBRUARY SINCE HE'S BROUGHT HER UP AS A TOPIC.

HUH?

HAS NOBODY REALLY SPOKEN TO HER MUCH LATELY?

NO WAY.

EH?

健康相談 受付

AND THUS, TODAY I CONFIRMED MY JUDGEMENT WAS CORRECT.

HOWEVER...

...IT'S HIGH TIME I AT LEAST GREETED HIM.

WHETHER OR NOT I VIEW THIS AS A CHANCE FOR MYSELF OR WHAT-HAVE-YOU IS A DIFFICULT DECISION TO MAKE.

UHMMM...

GREETINGS. IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE.

IT WAS ROUGHLY TWO YEARS AGO. HERE AT THIS HOSPITAL.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE FACE OF THE ONE TO WHOM YOU OWE YOUR LIFE?

WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?

?

H-mmmm...

SORRY TO SAY, BUT I HAVEN'T FELT LIKE MY LIFE'S BEEN IN ANY SORT OF DANGER FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS.

Even though you SAID you were going to remember

SO YOU IDENTIFY GIRLS BY THEIR HATS, DO YOU.

ALTHOUGH THE GIRL BACK THEN WASN'T WEARING A BERET.

THAT TIME I FELL BACKWARDS AND LOOKED LIKE I WAS GOING TO BASH MY HEAD.

AHH!

WELL THEN, ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE ATTEMPT TO REMEMBER.

SORRY, I'M JUST BAD WHEN IT COMES TO RECALLING GIRLS' FACES.

ON TOP OF THAT, WHEN I DID REMEMBER A BUNCH OF THEM SAKI-SAN'S MOOD PLUMMETED.

MY NAME IS IWANAGA KOTOKO.

KANJI-WISE, THAT'S THE "GAN" FROM (GANSEKI)/ROCK, THE "EI" FROM (EIEN)/ETERNITY, "KOTO" LIKE THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT, AND THE "KO" FROM CHILD.

I'M SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

I'M ENERGETIC AND HEALTHY.

AFTER ALL, IT LOOKS AS IF YOU'VE BROKEN UP WITH SAKI-SAN AS WELL.

INDEED YOU SHOULDN'T.

YEAH, I WON'T FORGET THIS TIME.

YOUR NAME IS SAKURAGAWA KUROU.

ACCORDING TO THE INTEL I'VE GATHERED, YOU'RE CURRENTLY TWENTY-TWO YEARS OLD AND, IN ORDER TO WISH YOUR COUSIN WELL, YOU'VE VISITED HERE FOR AT LEAST THE LAST THREE YEARS.

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE PEOPLE I'VE ASKED!

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

I'VE BEEN FREQUENTING THIS HOSPITAL FOR CLOSE TO SEVEN YEARS NOW.

SINCE I'VE GROWN SO CLOSE TO THE NURSES, I CAN CARRY FAVORS WITH THEM.

I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO PROTECTING PEOPLES' PERSONAL INFORMATION AT THIS HOSPITAL.

SMELLS PRETTY FISHY TO ME.

IS THAT SO?

THEY SAID THEIR DUTY TO PROTECT THOSE RIGHTS DOESN'T EXTEND TO THOSE PAYING GET-WELL VISITS AND THE LIKE.

HOWEVER, AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, THEY DIDN'T TELL ME THE NAME OF YOUR COUSIN, KUROU-SAN, NOR THINGS SUCH AS WHAT THEY WERE ADMITTED FOR.

YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT KNOWING.

AND BESIDES, THE REASON THEY WERE HOSPITALIZED LONG-TERM MOSTLY ISN'T ALL THAT INTERESTING IN THE FIRST PLACE.

SO.

REGARDING OUR CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR **BREAKING UP** WITH SAKI-SAN NEAR AND ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING.

MY PERSONAL DATA REALLY ISN'T PROTECTED AT ALL, IS IT.

THAT'S DUE TO YOU ENGAGING IN NEEDLESS CHIT-CHAT WITH YOUNG NURSES WITHOUT THINKING.

IN ANY CASE, YOU FIND YOURSELF QUITE PUBLICLY SINGLE.

...COULD YOU PLEASE JUST JUMP TO THE MAIN POINT?

DO YOU HAVE ANY INCLINATION TOWARDS TRYING TO GET A FRESH START THROUGH MEETING A NEW GIRL?

WON'T YOU GO OUT WITH ME, AS A PREAMBLE TO ONE DAY GETTING MARRIED?

I'VE BEEN CARRYING A ONE-SIDED TORCH FOR YOU FOR TWO YEARS NOW.

AND I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT.

YOU'RE MUCH MORE DIRECT THAN YOU LOOK.

AND PERSISTANT TOO, WAITING TWO YEARS AND ALL, BUT...

BUT DATING A MIDDLE-SCHOOLER, LEGALLY THAT'S KINDA...

Mind coming down to the station with me?

ONE CAN ALWAYS WAIT FOR ONE'S DESTINY TO ARRIVE.

むす。

HOW RUDE! ONLY OCCASIONALLY.

YOU FREQUENTLY SLIP INTO OUR PLEBEIAN WAY OF SPEAKING, HUH.

ARE YOUR POWERS OF RECOLLECTION NO BETTER THAN THOSE OF A CHICKEN?!

AS I SAID, I AM A SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT!

NEXT YEAR I PLAN TO TAKE THE EXAMS TO ENTER THE SAME UNIVERSITY YOU'RE ATTENDING!

ding

HAHA-!

TO THINK I'D BE CONFESSED TO BY A HIGH SCHOOL GIRL, WELL IF THAT ISN'T JUST AS UNEXPECTED AS GETTING DUMPED I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.

PUTS ME IN THE FIRST GOOD MOOD I'VE BEEN IN FOR A LONG TIME.

I WAS JUST JOKING. THAT WAS PRETTY FUNNY.

WE HAD PERIODS IN A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP TOO, AND WE GOT OVERCAME THOSE.

WE'D BEEN DATING SINCE AROUND HIGH SCHOOL.

DID SAKI-SAN DUMP YOU IN A VERY CRUEL FASHION?

BUT THE ONE WHO DID THE DUMPING WAS SAKI-SAN, RIGHT?

IT WASN'T SAKI-SAN'S FAULT!

THAT'S WHY OUR BREAK UP CAME LIKE A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

I'D EVEN BEEN INTRODUCED TO HER PARENTS. WE'D EVEN REACHED THE POINT WHERE WE'D TALKED ABOUT FINALIZING OUR ENGAGEMENT NEXT YEAR.

I MEAN, I UNDERSTOOD, BUT THERE WAS SO MUCH I JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE.

THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT.

EH?

SPECIFIC-ALLY...

SO YOU CAN SEE HOW DATING SOMEONE NEW WOULD BE OFF THE TABLE FOR A WHILE.

HI?

SPECIFICALLY SPEAKING, WHAT WAS THE REASON YOUR RELATIONSHIP COLLAPSED SO UNSEEMLY INTO BREAKUP?

AT THE END OF LAST YEAR, I TOOK A TRIP WITH SAKI-SAN TO KYOTO.

SINCE WE WERE THERE, WE PLANNED TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR BY PAYING OUR FIRST TEMPLE VISIT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

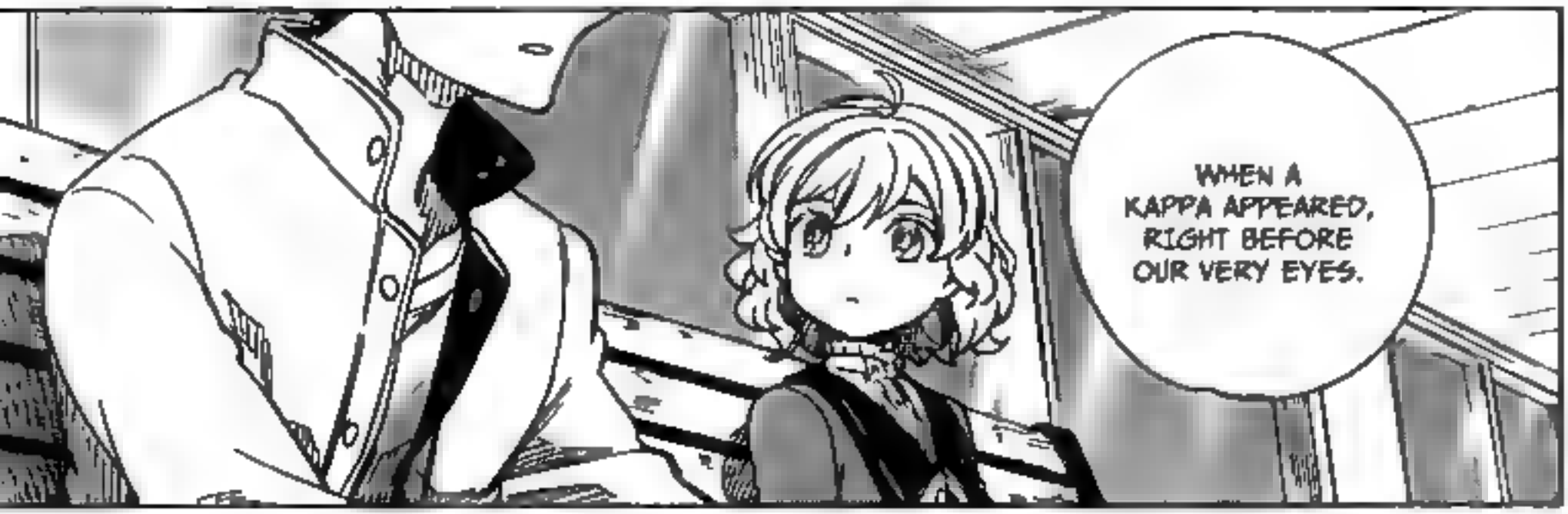
AND SO...

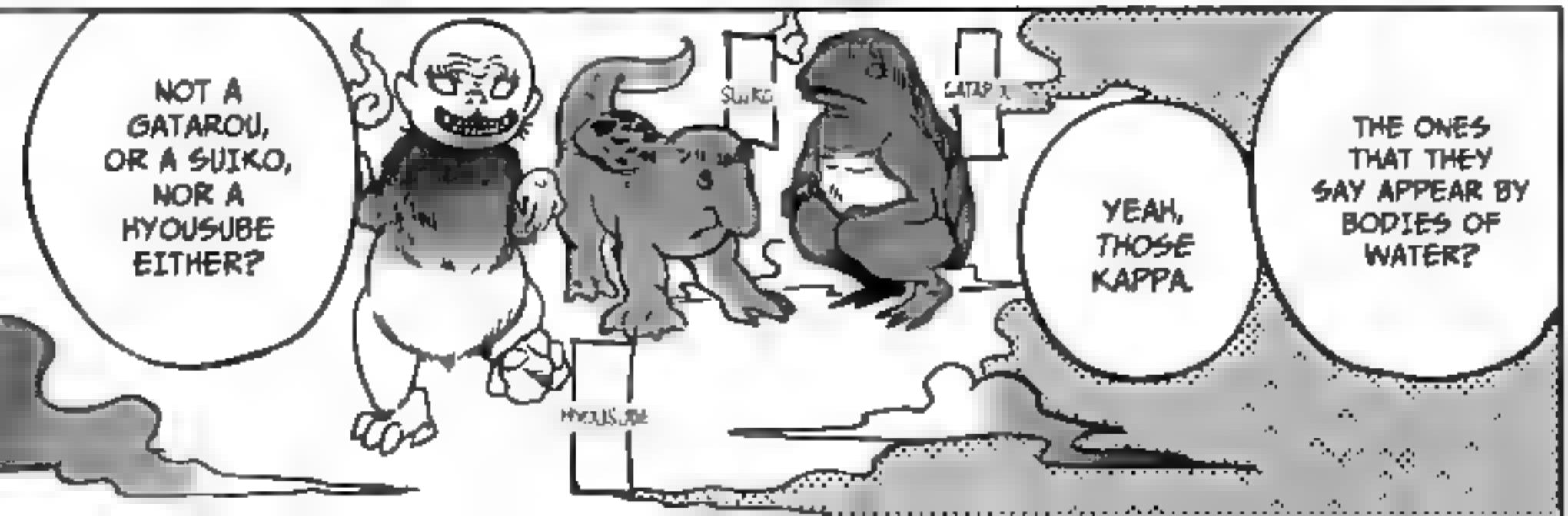
THE TWO OF US WERE TAKING A NIGHT STROLL, WALKING ALONG THE KAMOGAWA RIVER AS THE TEMPLE BELLS RANG IN THE NEW YEAR.

EXACTLY WHAT ERA ARE YOU LIVING IN, EXACTLY?

A PRE-MARITAL OVERNIGHT TRIP-! HOW INDECENT!!

splash


WHEN A KAPPA APPEARED, RIGHT BEFORE OUR VERY EYES.


NOT A GATAROU, OR A SUIKO, NOR A HYOUSUBE EITHER?
SUIKO
GATAROU
HYOUSUBE
YEAH, THOSE KAPPA.
THE ONES THAT THEY SAY APPEAR BY BODIES OF WATER?

DESPITE THAT, IT WAS CLEARLY ALIVE AND MOVING. SO IT WAS SOME KIND OF LIVING THING.

THE ONE THING I WAS SURE OF WAS THAT THING WASN'T A HUMAN, OR ANY KIND OF KNOWN ANIMAL.

IN ANY CASE, KAPPA SEEMED APPROPRIATE ENOUGH TO CALL THE "THING" WE SAW.

YOU'RE PRETTY KNOWLEDGABLE, HUH. THAT'S SOMEHOW KINDA UNEXPECTED, COMING FROM YOU...

IT WAS A PRETTY TERRIFYING THING!

THE INSTANT WE RECOGNIZED IT, I GUESS YOU'D SAY A FISSURE RAN THROUGH THE RULES THAT GOVERNED OUR WORLD... IT HAD THAT KIND OF PRESENCE.

IT WAS LABELLED AN 'ACCIDENT', BUT THE ACTUAL CAUSE REMAINED UNKNOWN.

THE NEXT DAY, THEY DISCOVERED A DROWNED CORPSE AROUND THAT AREA.

AT THE TIME THAT WE SAW IT THERE WAS A STRONG ODOR OF MUD EVERYWHERE, AND THERE WAS A GUY WITH A LIQUID GUNK STUCK TO HIM LIKE SOMETHING OR SOMEONE HAD DRAGGED HIM UP THE RIVERBANK.

KAPPA'S AREN'T EVIL CREATURES, YOU KNOW.

THESE DAYS THEY'RE MOSTLY CHEEKY, CHIC RASCALS USED TO ADVERTISE EBISEN/SHRIMP FRIES AND SUSHI.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN YOUKAI, OR IN THINGS LIKE GHOSTS OR SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY EITHER.

BUT THAT NORMALLY TOTALLY IMPUDENT SAKI-SAN OF MINE?

SHE WAS TERRIFIED AND TREMBLING LIKE SHE NEVER WOULD IN PUBLIC...

...AND SHE CLUNG TO ME.

AND THEN? WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

NO NEED FOR ANY TALES OF PILLOW TALK THANK YOU. THEY'RE NOT INTERESTING IN THE LEAST.

EVEN THOUGH SHE NEVER EVEN DID *THAT* WHEN WE WERE IN BED TOGETHER.

OF COURSE, I CAN'T EXACTLY SAY I WOULDN'T LIKE BEING RELIED ON LIKE THAT IN THE RIGHT *CIRCUMSTANCES.*

TURNING A BLIND EYE TO SAKI-SAN IN THAT STATE...

...I UP AND RAN AWAY. JUST DASHED OFF, CRYING OUT IN TERROR WITH A QUAVERING VOICE!

LATER, SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE NEVER THOUGHT I WAS THAT KIND OF PERSON.

AFTER THAT, SAKI-SAN GREW PRETTY AWKWARD. AND WHEN SHE LEFT HERE TO FIND WORK IN MARCH SHE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO BRING UP THE TOPIC OF BREAKING UP.

IT'S THE KIND OF STORY THAT'D MAKE MOST PEOPLE SAY, "WELL, YEAH, OF COURSE THAT'S THE WAY IT PLAYED OUT".

50

...WELL.

BUT IT'S A FACT THAT SHE I OFF AND LEFT HER.

YOU WERE FACE-TO-FACE WITH A KAPPA.

FROM NOW ON, EVERY TIME SHE SEES A DROWNED BODY SHE'LL PROBABLY THINK IT'S POSSIBLE A KAPPA DID IT. IT'D BE NICE TO KNOW THE WHOLE THING DIDN'T RAUMATIZE HER.

14.40

I GUESS SAKI-SAN'S AT POLICE ACADEMY RIGHT ABOUT NOW, IN THE MIDDLE OF TRAINING.

SHE'S NOT SO CRUEL A WOMAN THAT SHE DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN IF HUMAN LIVES ARE DESTROYED BY A KAPPA.

THE FATE OF SUCH A CRUEL WOMAN HARDLY EVEN MATTERS ONE WHIT, DOES IT?

NO, I GUESS IT'D MAKE ME A COLLEGE STUDENT WHO WENT CRACKED IN THE HEAD FROM THE SHOCK OF GETTING DUMPED.

WHICHEVER YOU GO WITH, I'M CERTAINLY NOT SUITABLE TO BE YOUR BOYFRIEND, RIGHT?

I DON'T REALLY CARE WHETHER YOU BELIEVE ME OR NOT.

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, THEN I GUESS THAT MAKES ME JUST A COLLEGE STUDENT SO CRACKED IN THE HEAD HE HAS TO BLAME A KAPPA FOR GETTING DUMPED.

I TAKE THE BUS AS WELL. I'M SURE OUR TIMETABLE IS ABOUT THE SAME TOO.

HOWEVER, THIS CONVERSATION ISN'T OVER JUST YET.

IT'S ABOUT TIME THE BJS/LL BE ARRIVING.

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO CLARIFY THE POINT.

WHICH OF YOU WAS THE ONE WHO RAN AWAY AND LEFT SAKI-SAN BEHIND?

THE KAPPA WAS ACROSS FROM SAKI-SAN. IT SAW YOU, BECAME TERRIFIED, AND FLED.

THE ONE WHO RAN AWAY WASN'T YOU, BUT THE KAPPA, WASN'T IT.

I SYMPATHIZE WITH IT.

TO THINK IT WOULD SUDDENLY RUN INTO YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...

TO THE KAPPA, IT WAS A DISASTER.

PRESICELY BECAUSE IT HAS INTELLIGENCE, IT UNDERSTOOD DREAD ALL TOO WELL, NOW DIDN'T IT?

"I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WERE THAT KIND OF PERSON."

AND FOR SAKI-SAN, WHO SAW YOU RUN OFF AT THE MERE SIGHT OF THAT REPULSIVE YOUKAI, SHE THOUGHT "WHAT KIND OF GUY IS HE?!", AND GREW CREEPED OUT BY YOU.

THAT'S WHAT SHE TOLD YOU.

AM I CORRECT?

THERE'S NO WAY SOMETHING LIKE KAPPA EXIST ANYWHERE IN THIS WORLD, RIGHT?

AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE?

YOU'RE MISTAKEN ON A REALLY FUNDAMENTAL POINT.

I WAS LYING.

I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO TALK HONESTLY ABOUT MY HEARTBREAK WITH A GIRL.

EVEN THOUGH YOU YOURSELF SAID THERE WAS ONE?

THEY DON'T?

OBVIOUSLY.

ALAS.

I ALREADY GET EXAMINED THERE ONCE A MONTH.

NEVERTHELESS, IF YOU STILL THINK THEY'RE REAL, I THINK IT'D BE BEST IF THE FIRST THING YOU DID WAS GET CHECKED IN THE PSYCH WING HERE.

WELL THEN, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

I SEE.

IN THAT CASE, I'D ADVISE YOU CONTINUE TO GET YOURSELF CHECKED OUT.

I HAVEN'T MYSELF COME TO KNOW A KAPPA EVEN ONCE

HOWEVER, I AM WELL ACQUAINTED WITH OTHER SIMILAR BEINGS OF THAT NATURE

LET'S CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATION

EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY NOT BE AS INFAMOUS AS KAPPA

THEY ARE SUFFERING AND FIGHTING AT US HERE IN THIS COURTYARD

I MEAN HERE IN THIS EVEN HERE IN THIS VERY MOMENT

FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE BUILDINGS AND THE TIPS OF THE DARKNESS BRANCHES

CREATURES CALLED SHIKI THEY ARE WATCHING EVERYWHERE

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE THAT THOSE THINGS ACTUALLY EXIST?

WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU?

"THAT IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS."

"THAT ITSELF...

...IS TERRIFY-ING."

...THEY DEFINITELY EXIST ALL AROUND US.

THE MAJORITY AREN'T THOSE WHO WOULD GO ON TO INFLICT HARM. BUT...

WHEN THOSE "BEINGS" SEE YOU, THEY WHISPER TO ME:

IN A PLACE DEEP WITHIN THE MOUNTAINS WHERE I'D BEEN DRAGGED, THEY BEGGED OF ME.

"WE BESEECH THEE, PLEASE BECOME THE GOD OF OUR WISDOM."

THE GOD OF THEIR WISDOM?

WHEN I WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD, I WAS ABDUCTED AND HELD FOR TWO WEEKS STRAIGHT BY THE VERY BEINGS WE'RE SPEAKING OF.

THEY DESIRE AN EXISTENCE THAT CAN MEDIATE FOR THEM IN ORDER TO QUELL CONFLICT.

THUS, THEY SEEK TO BORROW WISDOM AND STRENGTH FROM OURSELVES.

YES.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THOSE BEINGS HAVE LOW INTELLIGENCE.

"YES, I'LL DO IT."

I SAID.

AND MY ELEVEN YEAR OLD SELF ANSWERED THEM:

IN EXCHANGE, THOSE BEINGS LEND ME A HAND AS WELL.

TROUBLE BREWS BETWEEN THEM AND HUMANS AS WELL, AND OFTEN THEY WORRY MY MIND OVER SUCH THINGS.

CLACK

EVER SINCE, WHENEVER THOSE BEINGS DEVELOPE A DISPUTE OR A PROBLEM...

...THEY JOURNEY FROM ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, SEEKING ME AND MY CONSULTATION SO I CAN ARBITRATE AND DRAFT PLANS FOR SETTLEMENTS.

...OR SOMETHING OF THAT SORT HAPPENS, THEY'LL LET ME KNOW. EVEN THOUGH I USE THEM TO CARRY FAVOR WITH THE NURSES, WE'RE ALL PROVING USEFUL TO EACH OTHER.

IF SOMEONE'S CONFUSED TWO DIFFERENT IV DRIPS...

IF ONE OF THE OTHER PATIENTS' CONDITIONS TAKES A SUDDEN TURN...

IF I'VE FALLEN ASLEEP, THEY'LL WAKE ME BEFORE IT'S TIME FOR MY MEDICAL EXAMS.

IF SOMETHING GETS LOST IN THE HOSPITAL, THEY'LL FIND WHERE IT IS

IN THAT CASE, PLEASE GO LOOK UP AND READ THE NEWSPAPERS FROM AROUND JULY OF SIX YEARS AGO.

QUITE RIGHT, OF COURSE.

IT'S ALL JUST SO UNBELIEVABLE.

YOU'LL SEE THAT A 5TH-YEAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GIRL FROM THIS CITY NAMED IWANAGA KOTOKO WENT MISSING WITHOUT A TRACE.

A PHOTO OF HER FACE WAS RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC AS WELL.

ONE WEEK LATER, A FULL-SCALE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION WAS LAUNCHED.

...THE GIRL WAS DISCOVERED DOZING WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD AGAINST A BENCH IN A PARK WITHIN THE CITY.

THEN, AT DAWN ANOTHER WEEK AFTER THAT...

IN CONSIDERATION FOR HER PRIVACY, THE PARTICULARS WERE KEPT SECRET.

LIKEWISE, NO BIG ARTICLES WERE PUBLISHED ABOUT IT, BUT ONE SECTION OF A LOCAL PAPER PRINTED SOMETHING THAT NEATLY READ LIKE THIS:

"THE GIRL WAS DISCOVERED WITH HER LEFT LEG AMPUTATED, AND HER RIGHT EYE CARVED OUT."

NATURALLY, THE CULPRIT WHO DID IT WAS NEVER CAPTURED.

AND EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE SERVED AS THE GOD OF THOSE BEINGS WISDOM.

gasp

CREAK

TIMES UP, ISN'T IT.

THAT SAID, LET US CONTINUE AT A LATER DATE.

ス!!

WE ARE NOW DEPARTING.

THE DOORS ARE NOW CLOSING. PLEASE STAND CLEAR.

OHH, PRINCESS~~~!!!

I WAS FEARFUL OVER WHETHER OR NOT THAT THING TOOK YOU AND ATE YOU ALL UP, PRINCESS!

HAVE YOU BEEN INJURED? HAS NOTHING HAPPPENED TO YOU?

I'M TELLING YOU, IT HASN'T BEEN DECIDED WHETHER HE'S REJECTED ME OR NOT.

AND ON TOP OF THAT, SHOWING THE EGREGIOUS DISRESPECT OF SOMETHING LIKE REJECTING THE PRINCESS...

THAT RANK, DREADFUL IMPURE ONE, WHAT GOOD COMES OF SPEAKING WITH HIM?

THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY, HE DIDN'T EVEN LAY SO MUCH AS A FINGER ON ME!

AND TO THINK YOU'RE ALL SO SCARED OF HIM. WHAT ON EARTH KIND OF SHAPE OR FORM DOES KUROU-SAN APPEAR AS FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW.

MAKING JUDGEMENTS JUST FROM LOOKING AT SOMETHING, AND LODGING COMPLAINTS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLES' LOVED ONES, NEITHER ARE VERY PRAISEWORTHY.

...WHEN I LOOK AT HIM, KUROU-SAN LOOKS LIKE A MATCH FOR ANY HUNK.

IT'S KIND OF AMAZING! AND DANGEROUS! ...OFFENSIVELY SO...

I CAN'T EVEN GET THE BASIC GIST FROM THAT.

AND HE'S SUSPICIOUS!

IT'S POSSIBLE HE SEEMS 'NON-STANDARD' WHEN SEEN THROUGH YOUR EYES, BUT...

NO, I STILL HAVE MANY LINGERING ATTACHMENTS FOR WHICH I WANT TO REMAIN IN THIS WORLD.

IS IT YOUR DESIRE TO BE *FORCIBLY* SENT ON TO HEAVEN?

...UM, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE YOUR LEFT EYE WAS TAKEN FROM YOU BY SOMEONE AS WELL, IS IT?

His appearance having missed the bus was good too.

I DO IMPLORE YOU TO PLEASE EXORCISE HIM QUICKLY.

HOWEVER, DUE TO THAT FELLOW I TOLD YOU OF STAYING IN THE LIBRARY, I CAN NO LONGER CARELESSLY APPROACH IT.

YES, ABOUT THAT MATTER.

こうお。。。

AN UNEXPECTED WORD'S APPEARED, CONSIDERING YOUR APPEARANCE.

IN THE NAME OF MY AMBITION TO FINISH READING THE "HARLEQUIN" NOVEL SERIES, I CANNOT YET ASCEND.

IF ONLY I COULD GET KUROU-SAN TO LEND ME A HAND, IT WOULDN'T BE DIFFICULT AT ALL, WOULD IT.

I MIGHT JUST TIDY IT UP TOMORROW.

AT THE VERY LEAST, KUROU-SAN'S CURIOSITY HAS BEEN PIQUED.

EVEN IF HE DOESN'T BELIEVE WHAT I SAY, HE HIMSELF SURELY KNOWS BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE THAT THERE EXIST "THINGS WRONG" WITHIN THE WORLD.

THAT THING?

IT APPEARED AS IF HE DIDN'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU TOLD HIM THOUGH, PRINCESS.

WHAT COMES NEXT, WELL, THAT DEPENDS ON KUROU-SAN.

IN JAPAN'S OLDEST WORK OF LITERATURE, CALLED THE "KOJIKI/RECORDS OF ANCIENT MATTERS", THERE IS RECORDED THE NAME OF A GOD CALLED KUEBIKO.*

*EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/KUEBIKO

ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT WALK UPON HIS ONE LEG...

...IT IS SAID THAT HE WAS A GOD OF WISDOM THAT KNEW MUCH OF THE WORLD.

Zzzz...

Zzzz

HE IS ALSO OCCASIONALLY SAID TO BE A ONE-EYED GOD, OR ELSE SAID TO HAVE TREATED WITH SOMETHING SIMILAR.

DUE TO HAVING ONLY ONE LEG, IT IS ALSO SAID HE IS CONNECTED TO THE ORIGINS OF THE SCARECROW.

THIS IS OFTEN DEPICTED, TO NO SMALL DEGREE, AS BEING ONE OF THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED OF SUCH A GOD IN THE FIRST PLACE.

FROM A WORLD-WIDE PERSPECTIVE, IT IS A COMMON TRAIT OF MANY BLACKSMITHING GODS TO BE ONE-EYED OR ONE-LEGGED.

IN ORDER TO CONSECRATE SACRIFICES TO THIS GOD, PEOPLE WOULD WOUND THEIR EYES ON ONE SIDE AND ENSHRINE THEM AS TOTEMS THAT CONNECTED GOD AND MAN.

IT LEFT A ROUGH CROSS-SECTION HERE, BUT...

...IT'S LIKE IT WAS MELTED, AND THEN SOLIDIFIED USING SOMETHING LIKE ACID.

手術中

ONE-EYED, ONE-LEGGED VARIETIES OF GODS CAN BE SEEN ACROSS A WIDE PLETHORA OF FOLKLORE.

WHAT EXACTLY *ARE* THESE WOUNDS?

TAP

TAP

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HER RIGHT EYE'S BEEN GOUGED OUT AS WELL, BUT...

...IT'S BEEN HEALED TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT NEITHER ANY PUS NOR SWELLING REMAIN.

THERE'S NO NEED TO PERFORM ANY ADDITIONAL TREATMENT.

KOTOKO-CHAN, TWO WEEKS JUST PASSED WHERE YOU DIDN'T RETURN HOME ONCE, RIGHT?

I WONDER, WHO WAS IT YOU WERE WITH DURING THAT TIME?

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAPPENED TO THIS LITTLE GIRL...?

WELL THAT'S NOT A BAD EXCHANGE AT *ALL*, I'D SAY!

MY LEFT LEG AND RIGHT EYE WERE STOLEN AWAY...

...SO THAT I COULD ACT AS THEIR GOD, THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?

I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER MUCH.

RIGHT.

WE'LL CHECK YOU FALSE EYE AND PROSTHETIC LEG, AND GIVE YOU COUNSELING SO YOU CAN REMEMBER SOMETHING FROM YOUR MISSING TIMETOO.

PLEASE MAKE SURE TO COME BY ONCE A WEEK TO GET YOUR EYE AND LEG EXAMINED, 'KAY?

CONGRATULATIONS. AS OF TODAY, YOUR REHABILI-TATION IS COMPLETE.

YOUR PARENTS ARE WORRIED SICK. 'WHEN IT RAINS, SHE'LL JUST AIMLESSLY FALL ASLEEP', THEY SAID.

DON'T YOU GO SLEEPING IN STRANGE PLACES AGAIN, GOT IT?

ALRIGHT THEN, IT'S POURING OUT THERE TODAY, SO BE CAREFUL TO WATCH YOUR STEP...

AH!

YOUR POWERS OF PERSUASION ARE J-UST A BIT LACKING AT THE MOMENT

ALTHOUGH THAT IS JUST LIKE YOU, IWANAGA-SAN.

IT'S SAID THAT 'A SLEEPING CHILD IS A GROWING CHILD'.

AND ALSO SAID THAT "GOOD FORTUNE COMES TO THOSE WHO WAIT IN SLUMBER", IS IT NOT?

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...I SUPPOSE AT TIMES LIKE THESE I SHOULD SAY "JUST AS PLANNED".

WHY, HELLO THERE.

ARE YOU DONE WITH WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING UP?

IT WAS AN ELEMENTARY DEDUCTION.

IN ORDER TO CONFIRM WHAT I TOLD YOU, I'M SURE YOU'D SEARCH ON THE NET FIRST.

YOU KNEW THIS'S EXACTLY WHERE I'D BE, HUH.

...AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT THE CASE WENT UNRESOLVED, I'M SURE THERE WASN'T ENOUGH INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO GET ANY RESULTS BACK.

HOWEVER, SINCE IT OCCURRED SIX YEARS EARLIER, THE VICTIM WAS A MINOR, AND SHE DIDN'T DIE...

...SO I'M SURE IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TIME TO LOCATE THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AT THE LIBRARY.

YOU WERE ABLE TO NARROW DOWN THE INCIDENT'S DATE FROM THE INTEL YOU FOUND ON THE NET...

FURTHER-MORE, THE INTERNET'S DESCRIPTORS ARE UNRELIABLE.

SINCE YOU'RE A PRUDENT MAN, YOU SHOULD THEN HAVE WANTED TO CONFIRM IT USING ACTUAL NEWSPAPER ARTICLES.

WELL?

YOUR THOUGHTS AFTER CONFIRMING WHAT I SAID?

THINKING OF THE TIMING INVOLVED, I BELIEVED YOU'D BE FINISHED WITH YOUR FACT CHECKING RIGHT ABOUT NOW, WHEREUPON YOU'D EXIT THE LIBRARY.

ONE HOUR EARLIER

HE JUST WENT TO THE LIBRARY!

GOOD WORK.

...AND, AS IT TURNS OUT, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID.

IT'S EMBARASSING TO ADMIT, BUT DESPITE HAVING MY RIGHT EYE GOUGED OUT, THE SHAPE OF MY FACE HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL SINCE MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DAYS.

IT'S TRUE THAT SIX YEARS AGO, A GIRL NAMED IWANAGA KOTOKO HAD A HORRIBLE ACCIDENT BEFALL HER BODY.

AND THE HEADSHOT MADE AVILABLE WAS ALSO A DEAD RINGER FOR YOU.

IT DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT YOU BECOMING THE GOD OF A BUNCH OF MONSTERS, YOUKAI, AND WHATEVER OTHER THINGS YOU NAMED.

BUT THAT'S ALL I FOUND.

HOWEVER, IF IT IS JUST A DELUSION THEN I WAS STILL ABDUCTED BY A DEVIANT.

INDEED.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PART WAS ALL JUST A DELUSION OF MINE.

THEN I'D BE A GIRL WHO'S GONE QUITE OFF IN THE HEAD DUE TO HAVING HER BODY TAMPERED WITH SO.

WHETHER YOU BELIEVE ME, OR DON'T BELIEVE ME, IS ENTIRELY YOUR FREEDOM TO DECIDE.

HOWEVER, IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THIS ENTIRE WORLD WHO CAN UNDERSTAND YOU.

YES.

THE OFFERING THAT CONNECTS GODS AND MEN, (OR IN OTHER WORDS/OR ELSE) THEY BECOME THE PRIESTESSES/MIKO WHO CAN HEAR THE VOICES OF THE GODS.

"A BEING WHOSE FORM IS REDUCED TO A SINGLE EYE AND A SINGLE LEG."

"IT IS SAID THAT FROM TIME TO TIME SUCH A BEING IS SACRIFICED TO THE GODS..."

...IS THAT IT?

I'M WONDERING, HAVE YOU HAD LUNCH YET? IF NOT THEN I'LL TREAT YOU!

I WONDER IF THAT ISN'T JUST AN INTERPRETATION THEY UP AND FLOUTED ON THEIR OWN.

WELL, EITHER WAY THEY UP AND SPIRITED ME AWAY ON THEIR OWN AND DID THIS TO MY BODY, NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE SAYS.

SFX: TAP 2X

SFX: SKRTCH

THE JURY'S STILL OUT ON THAT. FOREMOST THOUGH, IF YOU DOUBT THE ABDUCTION THAT MUCH, COME SPEND SOME TIME AT MY ESTATE.

IF YOU WERE TO MARRY ME, THAT LAND AND HOUSE WOULD COME WITH IT.

I STILL DON'T GET IF THE WAY YOU SPEAK SHOWS WHETHER YOU WERE RAISED WELL, OR POORLY.

I ATE A SIMPLE MEAL OF KYOUYASAI TO MY HEART'S CONTENT ALREADY, SO LATER.

EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/KYOYASAI

WHAT KIND OF NAIVE, YOUNG MAIDEN-LIKE THINGS ARE YOU SAYING?

NO, I DON'T REALLY WANT A CALCULATING ROMANCE LIKE THAT.

IT'LL ALSO BE ABLE TO HELP YOU FIND A PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT.

WELL THEN, WHAT IF I WERE TO CONFESS THAT YOU'RE JUST MY TYPE?

I DON'T CONFESS TO ANYTHING LIKE THAT THOUGH.

DON'T YOU KINDA THINK YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOING AND SAYING SOME THINGS THAT YOU SHOULDN'T BE SAYING?

IF IT DOESN'T COME WITH AT LEAST THAT MANY MERITS, YOU WOULDN'T DO IT, RIGHT?

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BUT...

THERE'S SOMETHING KINDA WEIRD ABOUT HIM.

THERE'S A LIBRARIAN HEADING OUR WAY.

WHAT'S WRONG?

NO...

OH YOU, STILL GOING ON ABOUT THAT...AH-! PLEASE WAIT, KUROU-SA...

PRINCESS!

WELL LOOK AT THAT, IF IT ISN'T A TRANSFORMING TANUKI.

THE LIBRARY'S BARRIER HAS BEEN BROKEN!

IT'S BECOMING A REAL MESS, PLEASE HELP US O---.....

KUROU-SAN, YOU STARTLED HIM RIGHT OFF THE BAT.

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING THOUGH.

PRINCESS, EVEN AFTER WE IMPLORED YOU THAT MUCH NOT TO TAKE UP WITH A THING LIKE HIM!

HII-?!

LET US GO TO EFFECTIVELY DISPEL THE DOUBTS YOU'VE BEEN SHOWING JUST RECENTLY.

EH?

KUROU-SAN, PLEASE COME WITH ME AS WELL.

HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THE BARRIER'S BEEN DESTROYED IS A BAD SIGN. LET'S MAKE HASTE.

WELL NOW, DON'T SAY THAT.

AND WITH THAT, I'M OFF TO GO HAVE LUNCH.

FAREWELL.

UH-UH.

MY DOUBTS PRETTY MUCH DISSAPEARED ABOUT THE TIME THE TRANSFORMING TANUKI SHOWED UP COUNTING ON YOU!

I BELIEVE IT.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT TOMORROW'S NEWSPAPER WILL FEATURE AN ARTICLE ABOUT A ONE-LEGGED, ONE-EYES YOUNG GIRL MASSACRED IN THE LIBRARY BYSOMETHING UNKNOWN.

THE YOUKAI WE'RE TALKING ABOUT IN THE LIBRARY, HE'S ALREADY A BRUTAL AND FEROCIOUS FELLOW.

WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WON'T YOU BE UNABLE TO ESCAPE FEELING ABSOLUTELY MISERABLE ABOUT IT?

YOU'LL BE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE CULPRIT...

ALTHOUGH I MAY NOT BE YOUR TYPE, THESE WOULD BE THE TRAGIC FINAL MOMENTS OF THE GIRL THAT CONFESSED TO YOU.

I PERSONALLY HAVE NO IDEA *WHAT* TEXTBOOK TO EVEN USE IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION!

YOU'RE REALLY HELPING OUT...

...IT'S JUST, I HAVE A SLIGHT COMPLAINT ABOUT YOUR METHOD OF CARRYING ME...

IN THIS SORT OF SITUATION, WOULDN'T PRINCESS-CARRYING ME BE THE TEXTBOOK PLAY?

INDEED.

BECAUSE MY PARENTS WORRY ABOUT IT, I CARRY A CANE WITH ME, BUT...

...I CAN WALK NORMALLY ON MY PROSTHETIC LEG, AND I CAN EVEN RUN A 50M DASH IN 9 SECONDS.

ALSO, I JUST REMEMBERED, BUT...

...DON'T YOU HAVE SOME PRETTY NICE LEG STRENGTH, TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CATCH AND SUPPORT ME THAT TIME IT LOOKED LIKE I WAS GONNA TUMBLE OVER?

THAT'S PRETTY UNCONVINCING...

OBLIGING ME BY DASHING WITH YOUR LONG LEGS REALLY IS A TREMENDOUS HELP.

HOWEVER, FOR SOMETHING LIKE A NUMBER OF STAIRS, THAT PUT A LOAD ON MY PROSTHETIC, IT PAYS TO ASCEND WITH PRUDENCE.

I'M SURE THOSE ARE PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING.

IF LUCK IS ON MY SIDE, I'LL ONLY DO SO TO THE AMOUNT I THINK YOU'LL WANT TO COOPERATE WITH ME.

OH NO, NOTHING OF THE SORT.

AREN'CHA JUST USING ME HOWEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT?

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PRINCE EEEEEE EESS!!

!?

OI!

ARE YOU ALRIG-

GYAH-! DID YOU REALLY BRING THIS FELLOW ALONG WITH YOU?!

HE'S THE REVENANT OF A FALLEN WARRIOR.

JUST CALM DOWN, KUROU-SAN.

THUMP

NOW THAT HE'S FALLEN TO SUCH FEROCITY, HE'S COMPLETELY UNMANAGEABLE.

HE'S FINALLY GONE UTTERLY BERSERK...

BUT LEAVING THAT ASIDE, IT'S TERRIBLE.

DAMNED RAPSCALLION. HE'S FINALLY DEVOURED HIS WAY INTO BREAKING THE BARRIER!

LET'S STOP THIS *RIGHT* HERE, SHALL WE.

I SHALL NOT FORGIVE THOSE WHO DON'T LISTEN TO...

...REAS... ON...

THE ORDER BETWEEN THE HUMAN WORLD AND THE WORLD OF AYAKASHI MUST BE PRESERVED.

ガブ!!

LEADING WITH HARSH WORDS IN THAT SITUATION, WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

THAT WAS NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN.

EH?

MY CONFESSION WAS ENTIRELY GENUINE!

AIMING FOR YOUR BODY ON OUR FIRST DATE CAUSED ME NO END OF EMOTIONAL PAIN.

YOU WERE ONLY AFTER MY BODY?!

HE'S ADDLED, AND IN A STATE WHERE HE CAN'T EVEN SEE HIS SURROUNDINGS, ISN'T HE.

WITH A MERE YOUKAI LIKE THAT, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A PIECE OF CAKE TO SUBDUE HIM WHILE HE WAS COWERING IN FRIGHT AT YOUR APPEARANCE, BUT...

IF WORDS CAN'T GET THROUGH TO HIM, THEN WE'RE LEFT WITH USING FORCE.

"USING FORCE" ...?

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

SOMETHING LIKE A TALISMAN, OR A SUTRA?

WOAH-!

MOOOOOOO
OOOOOO-!!

THE

PHEEEEWWW

THE DEGREE TO WHICH I CAN CUDDLE UP TO YOU IS QUITE HIGH.

NOT THE TIME TO BE TALKING ABOUT THAT...

AHHH...

JUST LIKE I THOUGHT, THIS WAY OF BEING CARRIED IS WONDERFUL.

ALL I DID WAS UNNECESSARILY ENRAGE HIM.

PFT-!

THAT DEFINITELY WENT TERRIBLY.

PLEASE SET ME DOWN.

AND LET'S ESCAPE F...OR... NOW...?

BRR MOO OOO OO-!!

IF YOU KEEP DOING RECKLESS THINGS, IT'S GOING TO BOTHER ME.

THAT'S NOT IT.

IF IT'S LEWD THINGS, WE CAN DO AS MUCH AS YOU WANT AFTER WE--

WHAT ARE YOU...?

KUROU-SAN?

KUROU-SAN-!

RUN AWA-

HOW CAN YOU BE SO INDIFFERENT WHEN YOUR BODY IS FACED WITH IMMINENT DANGER LIKE THAT-?!

BOTH TWO YEARS AGO...

...AND RIGHT NOW...

...MAKING A FACE LIKE NOTHING MATTERS...

!!

?

HEARING THAT FROM *YOU*, WHEN ALL YOU DO IS RECKLESS THINGS IS PRETTY ANNOYING.

SINCE I THOUGHT FOR SURE THIS IS THE KIND OF CALL YOU'D MAKE BASED ON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE.

UH-HUH.

...-!

SLIP

AHH~

IT LOOKS LIKE MY FLESH BECOMES POISON FOR THEM AFTER ALL, HUH.

WOOF!

NIGHTWOOD

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JUST WHO OR WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU?

KUROU-SAN...

YOUR LITTLE BEINGS SEARCHING FOR WISDOM DIDN'T TEACH YOU?

WHEN IT COMES TO WHO THE TRULY TERRIFYING ONE IS, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT AVOIDING.

...LET'S SEE, IF I WERE TO BORROW YOUR OWN WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT...

WHEN I WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD...

...THERE WERE ONLY TWO TYPES OF YOUKAI-HENGE THAT I ATE TO MY HEART'S CONTENT.

SHE FELL IN LOVE.

SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT HE WASN'T A NORMAL PERSON!

HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS THIS BOTTOMLESS OF AN EXISTENCE...

NEXT ISSUE, APPEARING ON THE FRONT COVER!!

Kyokou Suiri - Invented Inference chapter 1
By Shirodaira Kyou and Katasaka Midori
Translator: Tall Is Love
Cleaning: 81 pages = 3 days